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TAGS: [KS](#) [MARR](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: SPI 13: U.S.-ROK SECURITY POLICY INITIATIVE TALKS

Classified By: A/POL Brian D. McFeeters. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary. The thirteenth U.S.-ROK Security Policy Initiative talks (SPI 13) took place June 8, 2007 in Seoul. Topics addressed included the transition of wartime operational command (OPCON), UNC Armistice maintenance responsibilities, airspace management, security cooperation in Afghanistan, USFK camp returns, USFK realignment, U.S. Army transformation in Korea, and regional security. The U.S. delegation was headed by Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Richard P. Lawless. Deputy Defense Minister Jeon Jei-guk headed the ROK delegation. SPI 13 took place less than one week after Defense Secretary Gates and ROK Defense Minister Kim met with other leaders at the three-day Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, at which Gates reaffirmed U.S. support for its allies in Asia and stated the importance of East Asia increasingly involving itself in the development and stability of Central Asia. Both of these issues featured prominently in the SPI discussions. SPI 14 is scheduled for late July in Hawaii. End Summary.

WARTIME OPCON TRANSITION

12. (C) Deputy Minister Jeon Jei-guk opened the discussion on OPCON transition by stating that to his understanding, "drafting of the plan for OPCON is moving forward as planned, under the leadership of General Kim and General Bell." Colonel Park Chan Joo then provided a detailed report of the OPCON Transition Plan, highlighting different aspects of the Implementation Plan, the concept for the Strategic Transition, the Transition Exercise Program, and the Implementation System. Jeon noted that the specific contents of the Transition Plan were coordinated at the working level and were "free from significant disagreements between the Koreans and Americans."

13. (C) Lawless stated that the Transition Plan is a critical first step in implementing OPCON transfer and worthy of discussion at the next Security Consultative Meeting (SCM), noting that the United States was impressed with the plan. Noting that this was one of the subjects that Secretary Gates was specifically briefed on, Lawless sought confirmation from Jeon that the Koreans were on schedule to sign the agreement no later than July 1, 2007. Highlighting that OPCON transition would call for separate war fighting headquarters

for the U.S. and Korea, Lawless asked about ROK plans for the location and funding of its headquarters.

14. (C) Jeon offered his assurances that the plan would be signed in June and implementation would begin July 1. Addressing Lawless' second question, Admiral Joong Ryun stated that the U.S. and Korea were currently discussing this issue, noting that the Ministry of National Defense (MND) was working to include funding for the warfighting headquarters in next year's budget. Jeon reassured Lawless that the establishment of a war fighting headquarters was a top priority for MND, and that he "expected no problem in securing the funding." Jeon said that a decision on the location of the headquarters would require further consultation with the United States.

UNC Armistice Maintenance Responsibilities

15. (C) PolOff David Wolff presented the list of the bilaterally developed principles governing the discussion of Armistice Maintenance Responsibilities as tasked at SPI 12. Wolff reported that USG and ROKG officials met at the Colonel-level on May 15 and May 18 to craft an appropriate list of principles, consultations that "were constructive and done in the spirit of cooperation." On June 4, representatives from the General Officers level met to discuss the same issue, and agreed to the Guiding Principles document. Once both sides formally agreed to the document produced, Wolff explained, it would be used to guide the discussion of the Senior Working Group charged with resolving the authority-responsibility mismatch problem.
BEGIN TEXT

Guiding Principles:

The wartime operational control (OPCON) transition and concurrent inactivation of the Combined Forces Command (CFC) that will occur on April 17, 2012 will change the relationship between the United Nations Command (UNC) and Republic of Korea (ROK) forces. From that date, the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff will assume sole command and control of ROK forces in Armistice, crisis and war. The United States and the Republic of Korea have therefore engaged in appropriate discussions on how Armistice maintenance responsibilities will be carried out following OPCON transition. Both parties have agreed that the following Guiding Principles shall serve as the basis for that comprehensive discussion:

- The United Nations Command will continue to support the Armistice and to facilitate an international response to armed aggression against the ROK.
- Korean Armistice Agreement will be maintained until the day it is superseded by an appropriate agreement for a peaceful settlement.
- Armistice maintenance will continue to be a responsibility shared by the UNC and the ROK military.
- Strong deterrence by ROK and U.S. forces will remain a key supporting component to maintaining the Armistice.
- As the ROK Forces/UNC relationship changes as a result of OPCON transition and inactivation of CFC, the disparity between respective Armistice responsibilities and authorities over forces must be resolved.
- The U.S. and ROK are committed to resolving the disparity between Armistice maintenance authorities and responsibilities NLT April 17, 2012.

END TEXT

16. (C) Lawless emphasized that the United States appreciates ROK recognition of the authority-responsibility mismatch problem. However, he noted that it is important to remember that, despite having reached agreement to transition OPCON on April 17, 2012, the Armistice issue is a "separate problem that we currently face everyday and not merely a minor procedural problem." Lawless noted that the U.S. concern is

that a crisis situation could occur that involves ROK forces and the UNC Commander. In a fast moving crisis with international implications, regaining stability would be difficult if not impossible for the UNC Commander, given the present situation. Of particular concern is a crisis that evolves into a military engagement in which the UNC Commander is responsible for armistice maintenance, but has no control over forces. According to Lawless, although we have given ourselves five years to reach a solution on this issue, "the sooner we are able to do so, the better off we will be." Lawless proposed that a roadmap be developed on this issue that could be discussed at the upcoming SCM in October, and that the Senior Working Group's work be noted in the minutes of SPI 13 to acknowledge where we are in the process.

17. (C) Jeon noted his satisfaction with all six declarations in the Guiding Principles document and concurred with Lawless' suggestions about developing a roadmap for discussion at the SCM, as well as keeping minutes for each update provided by the Senior Working Group to SPI. MND Director General for the International Defense Policy Bureau Kim Kyou-hyun also noted his satisfaction with approving the Guiding Principles at SPI and the ROK side's willingness to responsibly resolve the Armistice issue at an early date.

AIRSPACE MANAGEMENT

18. (C) Jeon provided an update on the Jik-do range issue, noting that construction had resumed in March and was scheduled for completion by mid-June, and that the range would be ready for operation by the end of August. According to Jeon, the U.S. and ROK would soon conclude a Memorandum of Understanding governing the allocation of usage time and maintenance costs. The ROK Air Force gave a briefing regarding the broader airspace management situation on the peninsula, and Jeon noted that a Working Group had been established and met four times to date. He added that efforts would be made to build an efficient airspace operation system that reflected the training environment and needs of the U.S. and the ROK. In order to do so, Jeon stressed that the U.S. Air Force (USAF) would need to provide information about the centralized control concept, planning, and training requirements. Jeon stated that high-level consultations between MND, ROK JCS, and USFK would need to occur. Jeon then noted that while the ROKG believed it was important to address the needs of USFK, "this process will take some time, so I ask for your patience."

19. (C) Lawless noted that if the United States did not believe this issue was important, we would not have raised it at the Blue House, identifying it as a serious problem that had not been resolved after three years of discussion. Lawless stated that the briefing, the letter, and the meetings notwithstanding, the ROKG tone seemed to suggest that this was a problem only for the United States, rather than a problem for the ROK or the Alliance, signifying a large "gap between our two sides' acknowledgment of how serious an issue this is." Lawless continued that if this problem was not resolved, it would have negative implications for the capabilities of the Alliance.

110. (C) Speaking about Jik-do range specifically, Lawless stated that it was his belief that the ROKG did not pursue this program with the necessary intensity or seriousness, which created the current problem. He noted that there was significant doubt on the U.S. side that Jik-do could be operational in the time-frame established by the ROKG, adding that even when the Jik-do range was completed, this would not solve the USAF's training problems, which extended far beyond Jik-do. He also noted that only 30 percent of the available training time would be allocated to U.S. units.

111. (C) The U.S. position, stated Lawless, "is that we need a comprehensive long term plan for airspace/training range management. The piecemeal approach taken by the ROK to resolve this issue, with a hands-off policy by the MND,

simply is not working." According to Lawless, this comprehensive approach should include updating the Pilsung and Jik-do memoranda of understanding to reflect that "range management," which was the responsibility of the ROKG, included proper funding for range operations. Lawless suggested that addressing this issue should occur at the MND at Jeon's level, and not be left to the Korean Air Force. Lawless also noted that because this issue had been elevated, it should be resolved before October's SCM and that the failure to do so would have serious consequences that could involve shifting USAF resources (units) away from the Korean peninsula, perhaps permanently.

¶12. (C) Lawless also raised the Electronic Warfare Training issue, explaining that the United States "needs this capability." Lawless noted that for many years, the United States was responsible for owning, maintaining, and operating electronic warfare (EW) equipment -- to the benefit of both air forces. During that period of cooperation, the United States bore almost the entire cost, even though in later years the ROK disproportionately used that equipment. Consequently, Lawless said, he was disappointed to learn that as the ROK takes over that mission and installs its own equipment, it has requested that the United States continue to pay for usage. He asked Jeon to clarify why this decision was made and to explain whether or not it was a final decision on the part of MND and the ROK Air Force.

¶13. (C) Major General Duane Thiessen noted his agreement that the issue of air space management in the ROK required a comprehensive solution and stated that he could "not see any way forward that did not include central management of the ranges." Because the requirements of the U.S. squadrons were not being met, it would be necessary to address this issue on a different plane than the attempts that have repeatedly failed in the past. "This is a management issue -- we know how to train pilots, so do you -- but we need to manage airspace the way we do everywhere else in the world," Thiessen said.

¶14. (C) Jeon responded that USAF training requirements were very important to the ROKG and that the assessment that Koreans do not take this issue seriously was "off the target." Jeon noted his belief that there had been some miscommunication and that MND was committed to determining how to resolve the issue of limited air space in the most efficient manner. He asked that the United States share more information about its training needs, provided this information was not classified. Responding to Lawless' comments that the issue be elevated to his level at MND, Jeon stated that in principle, "airspace is a matter that must be dealt with in technical terms, so the authority has been delegated to the Korean Air Force. However, since the last SPI, the ROK JCS had taken up responsibility on this and MND would soon join JCS in reviewing the matter." On the issue of maintenance costs for the Pilsung range, Jeon stated that "at the time when the construction of the Pilsung range began, the understanding principle was that the equipment would be provided and operated by the U.S. and Korea would provide the land. Since then, Korea and the U.S. have divided costs and usage time in half. On August 3, 2005, Pilsung management was transferred to Korea, and they received a U.S. request to bear the entire cost for Pilsung."

Jeon noted that even when the United States managed Pilsung, the ROK bore half the cost, meaning that, "responsibility for the management of the range does not equate to responsibility to bear its entire maintenance cost," while noting that a solution still needed to be determined. On the issue of EW equipment, Jeon stated that in the 2004 Agreement, the United States promised it would continue to operate EW equipment until the Korean Air Force had this equipment ready. The ROKG therefore did not understand why the USAF withdrew all its EW equipment in September 2006, Jeon said.

¶15. (C) Lawless responded that "a number of these issues have cooked over time and are now boiling." He reiterated that the USG views EW Training differently from the ROKG, in that the United States made a good faith effort to provide

the services, never expecting the ROK Air Force would wait until 2011 to install its own equipment. Lawless stressed the need to address these issues in a comprehensive way, suggesting that the only way to resolve the issue was to elevate it to the Deputy Minister level. Jeon nodded his head in agreement.

Security Cooperation: NATO/ISAF

¶16. (C) Lawless stated that at the last SPI meeting, the USG and ROKG discussed the process and requirements for the ROK becoming a full non-NATO member of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and that the ROKG had reiterated its commitment to this process. Lawless further noted that he had already made clear in discussions the previous day at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) that the United States would support any ROK troop extension in Afghanistan, as well as the establishment of a ROK Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) there. Lawless emphasized that working with NATO was a worthwhile, if time-consuming, endeavor, and that NATO's decision to offer a partner-level partnership to the ROK was an important one reflecting the Korea's development.

¶17. (C) In addition, Lawless extended the full support of the U.S. Mission to NATO in Brussels, the OSD NATO group, and the State Department to work with the ROK in its interactions with NATO's bureaucracy. Lawless pointed out that "the Korean presence in Afghanistan had been very important both for the real work being done there and for the optic of Korea being engaged -- on the ground -- in Central Asia. For this reason, the U.S. believes it would send the wrong signal for the ROK to completely disengage from Afghanistan, which is happening now, upon instructions from the National Assembly."

Lawless repeated an offer made the previous day to Deputy Foreign Minister Shim, that the United States would bring a briefing team to assist Korea in working with NATO. If Korea were to leave Afghanistan, Lawless said, "you would be the first country to do so. And we think that would send a negative message globally, and would send the signal that Korea is inclined not to be engaged in Afghanistan or in Central Asia."

¶18. (C) Jeon noted that the Koreans fully understood the U.S. position regarding Korea's future endeavors in Afghanistan, and that they "appreciate the effort the U.S. is dedicating to the cause in Afghanistan." According to Jeon, the ROKG had received the necessary agreements to make the transition under NATO ISAF and hoped to go through that process as soon as possible. Regarding the Korean units deployed in Afghanistan, Jeon said that "the National Assembly has set the deadline, and by the end of December, these units will be removed." He noted, however, that the ROKG was currently reviewing other means of contributing to the international effort in Afghanistan after ROK troop withdrawal, including a PRT.

Camp Returns

¶19. (C) Jeon said he was satisfied with the completion of SOFA procedures for the return of nine camps on May 31, and noted that future camp returns should not rise to SPI-level discussions, but be handled solely through the SOFA process. Jeon explained that MOFAT, MND, and Ministry of Environment (MOE) officials were currently preparing for a June 25-26 National Assembly (NA) hearing on the camp returns process that has been called by the Environmental and Labor Committee. The focus of the hearing will be on environmental remediation of the returned camps and how U.S.-ROK negotiations were handled on the issue. Jeon offered his assurances that MND and other ROK ministries did not wish to see the camp return issue publicized and would work to convince the NA that the best decisions possible were made in handling the issue.

¶20. (C) Jeon requested that USFK provide any required information to help ROK officials prepare for the hearing, as General Pace suggested USFK would be able to do on the sidelines of the Singapore meetings. MOFAT Special Coordinator Hwang explained that the ROKG concern was that under special legislation, the NA has the authority to summon government officials to the NA hearing and require any document requested be provided. While recognizing that the domestic legislation conflicted with SOFA arrangements, Hwang explained that if a ministry official refused to provide requested documents, he/she could face criminal prosecution.

¶21. (C) Lawless stressed that the United States had nothing to hide, but that the concern was with how the information would be distributed and used. Jeon explained that the ROKG was not requesting the release of all U.S. documents related to the camp return process, but only that USFK provide any specific information that ROK officials find they need to prepare for the NA hearing. Jeon concurred with Lawless' request that the ROK side obtain U.S. agreement on how any shared information would be used.

¶22. (C) Jeon said that the two-year delay in processing camp returns under the SOFA provisions was due to different legal interpretations of the SOFA Joint Committee minutes by the ROK and the U.S. sides. Specifically, the ROKG focused on the point that the ROK domestic environment be protected, Jeon explained. Jeon suggested that time be taken to clarify the SOFA provisions regarding camp returns to avoid such time-consuming delays in the future. Lawless stressed that the United States did not wish to revise the provisions, but agreed that further discussions to clarify the procedures already in place to make the process more efficient would be helpful, noting that they should begin after the June 25-26 NA hearing.

¶23. (C) Lawless noted that the United States was in receipt of two letters from MOFAT requesting a U.S. decision within a week to release SOFA documents related to camp returns, including the nine facilities returned on May 31. Lawless noted that, in accordance with the SOFA, the public release of documents required the agreement of both sides, and therefore, that the understanding was that without U.S. agreement, the documents would not be released to the public or NA. Lawless explained that the release of these documents, particularly the very negative MOE documentation received by the United States on May 31, would present a very unbalanced and negative picture of U.S. stewardship of lands in the ROK. Lawless noted that if the documents came out, the United States would have no choice but to aggressively respond, but was concerned that the resulting media "nightmare" could harm the Alliance. Lawless also said that the United States would expect a comprehensive, joint USG-ROKG response to mischaracterizations in the press and public if the documents were released or leaked, and requested that the ROKG remain in contact with the U.S. Embassy and USFK to prepare a unified response as the situation develops.

¶24. (C) Jeon said that the ROKG was aware of U.S. concerns, and acknowledged that the ROKG could not disclose SOFA documents without U.S. consent. Jeon noted that the NA Environmental Committee wanted all the documents related to camp returns to be disclosed, but that the ROKG did not support this. However, the ROKG believed that the release of the 2003 Tab A documents would not cause significant difficulties for either side, Jeon said. Jeon explained that the ROKG planned to justify the two-year delay in negotiations by showing that the SOFA environmental provisions did not provide sufficient guidance. Jeon reiterated the ROKG request for U.S. cooperation in sharing necessary information as they prepare for the NA hearing on June 25-26.

¶25. (C) While concrete details have not been determined, Jeon said that a public groundbreaking ceremony to demonstrate ROKG support for the Yongsan Relocation Plan (YRP) and Land Partnership Plan (LPP) projects were planned for the September-October timeframe at Parcel K. The ROK side then provided an update on the Camp Humphries construction project. The final ROK family remaining on the site was expected to vacate the land by the end of June. Parcel 2 was expected to be granted after demolition and waste projects are completed in July. Parcel 1 was currently being landfilled and Parcel K design work is underway, with construction expected to begin in late June. Access roads for construction were currently under design, with completion slated for June 2008. Expansion of local roads could be completed by December 2008.

¶26. (C) Jeon reported that the Final Master Plan (MP) was currently under review by MOFAT. In mid-June, the Final MP would be submitted to the SOFA Joint Committee for approval. Following the signing of the Program Management Consortium (PMC) contract with the U.S.-ROK CH2M Hill-Kunwon consortium on June 7, Jeon said that the ROKG anticipated that the PMC verification of the Final MP would take about three months. Jeon said that the ROKG did not have an obligation, and did not intend to report, the SOFA-approved Final MP to the NA. However, when the ROKG briefed the NA on the MP in February, they had told the NA that the exact budget and project period would be available only after PMC verification, Jeon explained. Therefore, after PMC verification is completed in September, Jeon said that the ROKG plans to report only the budget and project period aspects of the Final MP to the NA, as well as to the public. Jeon offered his assurances that the ROKG would coordinate with the U.S. side to determine the scope of reporting to the NA and the public in order to keep the issue out of the limelight. Jeon said that no public hearing on the Final MP was expected.

Special Measures Agreement

¶27. (C) Lawless noted that the United States was considering the ROKG proposal on a "new" Special Measures Agreement (SMA) process after a meeting earlier in the week (reported septel). Lawless emphasized, however, that the United States continued to adhere to the previous understanding that once SMA funds were provided to USFK, they became part of the USFK pool of funds and could be used for relocation-related expenses. Lawless noted that SMA was likely to remain an issue in future SPI meetings due to the impact SMA funding issues had on the implementation of U.S.-ROK agreements already in place. In response, Jeon noted that bilateral discussions to improve the burden sharing mechanism were underway and expressed hope that they would yield satisfactory results.

US Army Transformation in Korea

¶28. (C) Lawless explained that Eighth Army transformation plans in Korea were consistent with overall U.S. Army transformation plans worldwide. Colonel Parker briefed current plans, noting that the transformation would create a warfighting headquarters and thereby bring greater capabilities to the peninsula Operational Command Post (OCP) in Korea. The pacific region's Main Command Post (MCP), able to provide additional support, would be located in Hawaii. The OCP in Korea and all its Army forces would remain under the operational control of the USFK Commander.

¶29. (C) Jeon said that it was apparent that USFK would be stronger and more maneuverable after the transformation, and thanked the U.S. side for the updated information. Jeon asked that the United States continue to remember that the capabilities of USFK had a direct impact on the security of the Korean peninsula. Offering ROK assistance as needed,

Jeon requested further updates as plans progress, so as to mitigate any security vacuum that may result from the transformation process.

2007 China Military Report

¶30. (C) Lawless provided the ROK delegation with copies of the DOD 2007 "Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China" and explained that DOD briefers would be available to answer ROK questions at SPI 14 in August. Lawless noted that a number of countries in the region paid close attention to the annual report and had requested U.S. briefings. Lawless briefly highlighted significant developments from last year's report and issues with direct relevance to the ROK, including China's expansion and deployment of intermediate range ballistic missiles capable of striking regionally.

¶31. (C) Jeon noted that Defense Minister Kim emphasized the need for both Japan and China to maintain transparency in their military development during his recent visits in the region. Jeon stressed that the ROK deemed transparency essential to maintaining peace and stability in the region and that the ROK continued to press China to pursue its military development in a transparent manner so it could contribute to, rather than threaten, the international community. Jeon said he looked forward to discussing the 2007 China Military Report further at the next SPI.

SCM FOIA Request

¶32. (C) Lawless explained that the National Security Archives, an organization associated with the George Washington University had submitted a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for all documents related to the previous 38 U.S.-ROK SCM meetings. Lawless explained that by law, the USG was required to either release the documents or justify the decision not to release the information. Lawless noted that some of the materials were prepared by the ROK side and were unclassified by the United States, but may still be sensitive for the ROK side. Lawless assured the ROKG that any information it deemed sensitive would be protected. In order to determine which documents are sensitive, Lawless requested that the ROKG identify a POC at ROK Embassy in Washington DC authorized to make decisions on what was classified and what could be released.

¶33. (C) Jeon agreed that some of the materials may be classified or sensitive information in the ROK, and said that the documents, especially those related to ROK national defense strategy vis-a-vis the North Korean threat, had to be reviewed very carefully. Jeon agreed that a ROK Embassy POC be established, but said that the review of documents would need to be handled by MND's U.S. Policy division and MOFAT. Due to the volume of the documents, Jeon said he expected the process would take a long time to complete, and recommended that the status be reviewed at future SPI meetings as needed.

PARTICIPANTS

¶34. (U) Participants List

United States

Mr. Richard P. Lawless, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense,
ISA/AP, OSD
MajGen Duane D. Thiessen, CJ5, USFK
MajGen Frank A. Panter, Incoming CJ5 USFK
Brig Gen Edwin A. Vincent, Mobilization Assistant to J5
USPACOM
Mr. Sung Kim, Director, Office of Korean Affairs,
DoS LTC Michael Finnegan, Senior Country Director for Korea,

ISA/AP, OSD

Ms. Mary Beth Morgan, Korea Country Director, ISA/AP OSD
Mr. Andrew Hyde, ROK Unit Chief, Office of Korean Affairs,
DoS
Mr. David Wolff, Pol-Mil Chief, AMEMB Seoul
COL Richard Parker, Chief Future Operations, EUSA
Col Chris P. DiNenna, Chief, Strategy and Policy Division,
J5-J, USFK
Col Robert Gardner, Deputy Chief C5 Policy, CFC
COL Kevin Madden, Chief Joint U.S. Military Affairs
Group-Korea
COL Kip McCormick, Defense Attache, AMEMB Seoul
Col Daniel J. Russell, Assistant Chief of Staff, Engineer,
USFK
Mr. David Rathgeber, Special Assistant to Judge Advocate,
USFK
Mr. Robert Mounts, Special Assistant to Deputy CDR for
SOFA,USFK
Lt Col (P) Bob Loynd, Chief Policy Coordination C5, CFC
LTC Steve Gransback, Deputy Chief Policy Branch, J5-J, USFK
LCDR Kevin Aanestad, Korea Desk Officer, NEA Div J5, JCS
Maj Rich McGlamory, Chief Int'l Relations, J5-J, USFK
Dr. Warren Switzer, Int'l Relations Officer, J5-J, USFK
1LT Kim Woo Joong, ROKAF Interpreter

Republic of Korea

Dr. Jeon Jei Guk, Deputy Minister of Defense for Policy, MND
Dr. Kim, Kyou-hyun, Director General, International Defense
Policy Bureau, MND
Mr. Hwang Seung Hyun, Senior Coord., Security Cooperation,
MOFAT
RADM (U) Kim Joong Ryun, Director Strategy & Planning, JCS
BG Kim, Byoung Gui, Senior Researcher for Alliance MND
BG (P) Yang, Chol Hwan, Director Operation & Training
Division, AF
COL (P) Yoo Jae Ik, Chief, ROK-US Alliance Task Force, MND
COL Song Seung Jong, Director, U.S. Policy Division, MND
COL Park Sang Ryool, Director, USFK Base Relocation Team, MND
COL Park Chan Joo, Chief, CIWG, MND
COL Youn Je Uk, Defense Policy, Blue House
COL Chi Yoon Kyu, Director, WMD Policy Team
CDR Lee Bong Chun, Action Officer, International Policy
Division, MND
LTC Kim Kyong Ok, Action Officer, U.S. Policy Division, MND
LTC Kong Pyong Won, Deputy Director, U.S. Policy Team, MND
Mr. Kim Jung Sup, Director, International Policy Team
Divisions
Mr. Park Jong Dae, Director, SOFA Affairs Division, MOFAT
Mr. Lee Jeong Kyu, Director, NAD III, MOFAT
VERSHBOW